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**The Social Characteristics of Hungarian
Historic City Centres**

**by
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1 Introduction

When taking a walk in Hungarian historic city centres today we don't feel any more that something is badly missing in them and we are neither envious comparing Hungarian historic city centres with the European ones seeing them on trips, travelogues or as a locale of art films. Today local citizens running their errands in the city centre or Hungarian and foreign tourists sightseeing there all can find the same typical European and global style of built and social environment in Hungarian city centres like in any other cities of West-Europe. The newly built or renovated public and private buildings, the regenerated facades, public spaces, walking and shopping streets, elegant shops, restaurants, coffee houses and terraces busy in summer, the artistic and other products are all representing a kind of European style in a special local taste depending on city size, climate, cultural traditions and lifestyle.

However we were not envying West-European city centres of all things, of course. We were not envious of their social problems that were so typical for the metropolises of the 1950–60s with urban riots, pickpockets, crimes, poor districts and slums emerging in certain spots or in the peripheries of city centres. We were not envious of the almost invisible internal social boundaries, of the segregation of rich and poor classes. We were neither envious of the socio-spatial borders marking where tourists must stop and go no further because this is a no entry zone – even for local middle classes – where the underclass and handicapped minorities live. But we did envy the clear appearances of wealth concentrated in city centres: the infrastructural basis of consumption, the renovated and conserved architectural heritage, the abundance of sights, restaurants and the whole atmosphere of a well to do society. But we were unaware how West-European citizens did see their own cities and city centres. Albeit this was the period when a growing number of middle class citizens started to abandon their cities out-migrating into urban peripheries, suburbs and villages in the suburban zone of cities. They did so just because they had experienced negative phenomena in city centres, because of the social problems concentrated there and because of the environmental damages and noise of transport.

The emergence and the evolution of the new social trends of market-based societies creating a new socio-spatial structure, the integration into the European urban network and the mechanisms of global economy have fundamentally changed the East Central European and Hungarian urban landscapes. Changing Hungarian city centres benefited from the same advantages described for West European city centres but they were hit by the same disadvantages and problems as well. Social tensions emerged in Hungarian city centres with striking contrasts between the glamour and the rapid development of city centres and the eroding physical conditions of inner city districts. Urban environmental pollution and

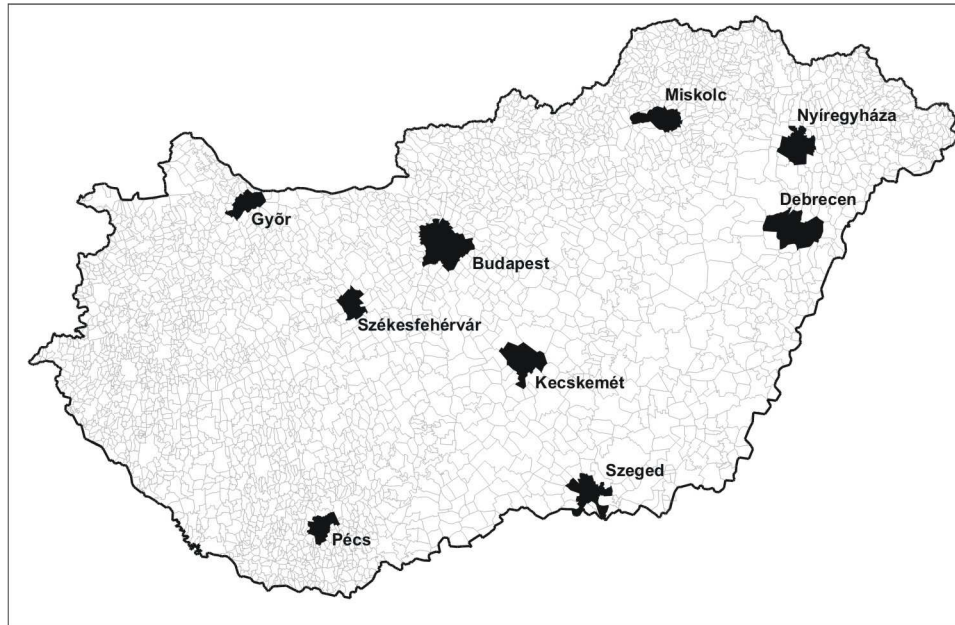
noise are getting more and more problematic issues. The contrasts in the social structure of city centres originating from the emerging market society and from the spatial impacts of social polarisation are getting more and more spectacular in the core areas of urban settlements showing the signs of wealth and poverty simultaneously. The centres of Hungarian big cities are also getting abandoned, the outmigration of middle classes from cities is motivated by several factors: their desire for living in a suburban environment, the new chances the housing markets offer for them after the change of regime and – for the lower classes – the high costs of city life, the too expensive real estate prices (and because of losing their job in the city).

The transition period has already been analysed by several researches. These researches have highlighted several important correlations between the socio-economic processes of Hungarian cities. In scientific aspect we have still insufficient information on contemporary Hungarian cities especially on their social characteristics. Beyond some signs of similarity we do not really know what processes have taken place and have been going on in the inner parts of cities. What characteristic features do social processes have in contemporary city centres (and cities) and what specific attributes do the social structure of city centres and the spatial location of social problems and conflicts have? What social factors determine the transformation of Hungarian historic city centres? This paper is seeking answers for these issues through a comparative analysis of the historic city centres of Hungarian cities, through the matching of Hungarian trends with West-European and East-Central European ones by presenting their most dominant mechanisms. I am starting from the assumption that generally the social changes of the Hungarian urban society are following the major European and East Central European trends in a historically determined Hungarian environment. The comparative analysis besides the re-interpretation of the relevant international research results is based on the results of a questionnaire survey having been carried out within the framework of National Research Development Programme in 9 Hungarian cities and their environment under the title '*Urban Spaces, Socio-Spatial Inequalities and Conflicts – the Socio-Spatial Factors of European Competitiveness*'.¹

¹ The objective of the basic and applied research carried out between 2004 and 2007 in Hungarian big cities and their urban areas is investigating the socio-spatial differences and social conflicts between the Hungarian urban areas and analysing the impacts of socio-economic problems on the social competitiveness of cities. Several methods have been used in the research. Beyond a representative survey of the local citizens, a document and a press analysis have been prepared and 100 interviews were made covering different profession groups. The project is operating in a corporate form of consortium. The leader of consortium is the Sociological Research Institute of HAS. The collaborating partners of the consortium are as follows: West-Hungarian Research Institute CRS HAS Central Transdanubian Research Group, Pestterv Pest County Regional, Settlement and Environmental Planning and Consulting Ltd., Kodolányi János College, The Regional Busi-

Figure 1

The geographical location of the largest Hungarian cities



Source: Edited by Szépvölgyi Á.

ness Development Foundation of Székesfehérvár. Project leader: Viktória Szirmai. The research sample area comprises urban areas centred by Hungarian big cities labelled so by the categorisation of Hungarian settlement geography (cities with over 100 thousand inhabitants) and their suburban zones. The project's sample area covers nine Hungarian big cities: Budapest with its agglomeration and eight Hungarian cities with over 100 thousand inhabitants – Debrecen, Győr, Kecskemét, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza, Pécs, Szeged, Székesfehérvár with their suburban zones. The spatial delimitation of cities in case of Budapest has been specified by law (89/1997 (V. 28.) Decree of the Hungarian Government specifying 81 settlements as members of the Budapest agglomeration). The delimitation of provincial cities has been specified by the Central Statistical Office's classification of agglomerations, agglomerating areas and settlement groups.

The questionnaire survey was prepared in the above-listed cities, their suburban zones and in two control settlements. A personal questionnaire was used as a method for data input resulting in 5248 successful interviews. The interviews were recorded between 12 November and 12 December 2005. The residential survey was conducted by TÁRKI Plc. on behalf of Sociological Research Institute HAS.

2 The transformation of European city centres

The perishing of urban environment was perceptible in European city centres during the 1950s and 60s. The concentration of urban development and the immigration of rural population into urban settlements and the growth of urban population resulted in quickly eroding housing estates turning into slums. The problems of natural environment, the level of noise, transport problems, the immigration of marginalised social classes, the concentration of underclass and handicapped ethnic minorities and deviant social behaviours grew to an unbearable level for the locals. Due to the above-mentioned factors the wealthy part of urban society outmigrated from city centres. The outmigration of urban middle classes slowed down the development of metropolitan centres and inner city districts were also abandoned. The decentralisation of economy and the relocation of urban economy into outer urban zones further intensified the decline of city centres. As a result of socio-economic suburbanisation the growth dynamism of suburban population was extreme. A new structure of urban society was born. Suburbanisation created a 'structural deficit' for urban centres, as wealthy classes moved out to peripheral districts while lower classes kept living there (*Innovative Policies... 1996, Territorial Development... 1999*). The 1970-80s gave a rise to immigrations as well. Foreign workers coming from African, Asian and Latin-American countries settled down in perishing urban districts and labour quarters in the proximity of city centres (*Hermann–Leuthold, 2005*). (The proportion of immigrants in some Swiss urban centres was higher than 50% (*Hermann–Leuthold, 2005*)). The number of central urban quarters with disadvantageous social environment, marginal or deviant social classes and accumulated social problems and conflicts, being unable to provide the essential basis for the social integration of their local residents increased in every cities of West-Europe (*Berger, 1998, 269–283*).

During the 1980–90s new trends emerged in spatial economic processes. In the socially developed West-European countries (even in the USA and Japan) the quick (re)centralisation of social economic life, the metropolitan concentration of global capital with its institutional system, multi-regional, interregional and transnational corporations, service sector and qualified labour force were the major processes (*Sassen, 1991, 17–35; Veltz, 1996, 33*). The demands of global economy required functional changes in central urban districts, such as the transformation of residential districts into administrative and business quarters. Several urban regeneration projects had been carried out in the city centres of Europe. These processes were formed through the articulation of the demands of globalisation and global economy towards urban centres, the globalisation generated social groups' demands for positioning themselves into urban centre located dwelling places. As various researches pointed out top-ranked global corporations

and their attached new classes – top salary managers, highly qualified professionals and stakeholder employees are generally located in central urban districts while the routine-like national companies and the members of the national middle class are situated rather in urban peripheries or good quality suburbs (*Sassen*, 1991, 245–322). The new trends of segregation referred to as ‘enbourgeoisement’ or ‘gentrification’ in literature gave a rise to upper middle classes in central urban districts. This unimportant now but continuously growing class is forming the structure of urban society in a special way. These ‘metropolitan businessmen’, the members of transnational middle-class society, international professionals, the key representatives of the academic, higher education and media sphere, the members of European governments, international organisations are the products of the development of service sector. They are not living in one city only, but travelling around cities and visiting various institutions located in urban centres; hotels, restaurants and major cultural events (*Martinotti*, 2004).

Since the 1990s the social structure of European cities has been formulated by the complementary and contradictory processes of gentrification and marginalisation. Gentrification is the most characteristic feature of historic urban centres, of the traditional elite urban quarters (‘Beaux Quartiers’) and elegant suburbs, while marginalisation is rather typical in peripheral urban districts (*Herman–Leuthold*, 2005, 4). Following the regeneration of urban centres the wealthy, native-born urban classes moved out from their old broken-down homes built in the 1950–60s and migrated into the residential quarters of inner city zones. Their abandoned homes were occupied by socially low-ranked immigrants and deprived classes. This process created a new spatial system of social inequalities, a wide gap between the central urban quarters of professional, wealthy and modern urban classes and the outer urban districts (periphery) of poorly educated, low-trained groups, less integrated to the urban society (*Herman–Leuthold*, 2005, 12).

3 The transformation of Hungarian city centres, the East Central European trends

Since the 1970s Hungarian and East Central European city centres have continuously been suffering from several problems: the physical breakdown of historic monuments and residential homes, the growing number of slums, the perishing of natural environment. The symptoms of urban deterioration became more significant in the 1980s. The social impacts of physical degradation were far less serious in the cities of East Central Europe than in West Europe. Although some social scientists had predicted some problems in the structure of urban society; the concentration of the poor, the old-aged and the Roma population in large cities was significant even in the periods mentioned above (*Ladányi–Szelényi* 1988, 83;

Musil, 2002) but the massive outmigration of middle classes from urban peripheries did not start at that time, though the distribution mechanisms of state housing provision, the building of new housing estates created some opportunity for some 'quasi-suburbanisation'. In several cases the society of housing estates was originating from the outmigration of the wealthy, socially high-positioned classes from city centres with better political chances for the enforcement of their interests. Within the framework of a centralized (redistributive) state housing provision system the modern, new housing estates built in the outer belt of city centres or in urban outskirts equipped with all comfort and amenities were considered as an acknowledgement of social and political position and a bonus for the loyalty to the state. The less preferential middle-class and lower middle classes, positioned at a lower level of the social and political ranking system, had no chances for leaving their homes located in urban centres within the framework of the state housing provision system (*Cséfalvay*, 1995, 41). During the period of state socialism suburbanisation was far less intensive in East Central Europe than in West European cities (*Musil*, 2002). This is explained by the strict limitations of the urban private home building regulations (*Illés*, 2002, 79). The Hungarian housing management system was more liberal than the regulation of house-building by introducing a more or less market-conform housing management practice.

The physical and social problems of East Central European historic city centres are partly originating from the past heritage of socialism. The development of urban centres was not or was only partly integrated into urban policies (*Lichtenberger et al.* 1995). By the ideology of state socialism the city centre is labelled as a kind of conservative, bourgeois phenomenon and for this reason urban development decisions attained no priority to the city centre. Political, ideological considerations, the efforts for managing the housing problems of the labour class, the demand for the treatment of quantitative housing shortages (among them the motivations of construction and house manufacturing companies) also played an important role in attaining key importance to the development of housing estates. Due to the utilisation of infrastructural development funds for housing estate construction purposes state or local government financed urban regeneration programmes and development projects were completely eliminated or were completed at certain urban spots only. The involvement of private capital into these projects was also impossible at that time.

The 1990s was a period of fundamental changes. These changes took place in a very contradictory way with a rapid and spectacular development at certain spots of urban centres while other parts were lagging and gradually perishing. The advantages of urban restructuring are originating from 'big city life'-styled development processes, from the domination of business and commercial functions. This assigns characteristic features for metropolitan centres: the building of financial centres, banks, office quarters the building of new or the rehabilitation of

urban economic and commercial centres, the construction of their servicing infrastructure, building or renewing hotels, shopping centres and business or market oriented real estate developments. The elegant shops, the new restaurants, bars and cafeterias, pedestrian streets, tourist spots create a modern urban environment in city centres.

Inner city quarters, with their new architectural styles invoke the atmosphere of global and West-European cities. This is explained by the stronger dependence of the inner cities' urban restructuring on the expansion of global economy and on its local impacts than on the processes of national economy. The special urban features of city centres, hotels, office blocks, commercial centres, self-service restaurants, amusement centres become more and more standardised from the functional solutions and applied design serving the interests of big multinational commercial and servicing firms. This inner city structure, turning more and more homogenous in its tendency, is mostly representing the interests of transnational and cosmopolitan elite groups (*Martinotti, 2004, 9*).

Central urban residential quarters are also undergoing a progressive development process. This is partly correlating with the fact that the transformation of residential homes into offices, the letting out of flats for office purposes with the renovation of buildings beforehand became typical trends following the privatisation of state homes. The increasing number of regenerated urban quarters and zones is an everyday process of our time. They are formulated by different models, in most cases within the framework of public-private partnerships. So far the rehabilitation models organised on social basis were rather plans or experiments than living realities. For this reason the slow and isolated nature of urban regeneration projects is a general problem in East Central European cities.

The implementation of the rehabilitation projects of central urban residential districts are hindered by the poor financial resources of local governments, which are too low for funding comprehensive urban regeneration projects. Home privatisation models are also problematic, as the majority of East Central Europeans is a homeowner with low income, and the renovation of their house or flat is unaffordable for them. The sharpening of social polarisation and the increasing income differences are also obstructive factors of involving private capital into regeneration projects. For this reason the physical deterioration, the amortisation of homes in the socially handicapped, broken-down urban core districts of East Central European capitals is a growing tendency. The quality of public spaces in urban centres, the living environment of green belts have significantly worsened, particularly in areas situated off the beaten track of the mainstream of urban development.

4 The special features of the societies of Hungarian city centres and East Central European tendencies

During the 1990s the population of the urban centres of East Central Europe radically fell off. This is a natural consequence of city centre's formation, of its changing historic role, of its weakening residential purposes, and of the domination of business-administrative functions (*Lichtenberger*, 1995b, 128). Increasing suburbanisation, the intensification of outmigration processes and the natural decrease of population have all contributed to the downfall of inner city residents.

Hungarian big cities and their urban peripheries are facing more or less similar processes. The number of inhabitants has decreased by 5% in the urban area of the 9 big cities between 1993 and 2003². The depopulation rate of these cities exceeded the national average (1.6%). It was nearly the highest (nearly 7%) in Budapest agglomeration while the total population of the 8 provincial cities decreased by 1.5%. The highest dropdown rate of population has undergone in the cities themselves. It was 14.6% in Budapest and 4.8% in the other 8 big cities as an average. In urban peripheries (mostly between 1998 and 2003) the number of inhabitants increased by 15.7%. The highest rate of increase can be seen in the urban peripheries of Budapest and Debrecen (20.2% and 30.6%) and the lowest in the urban periphery of Miskolc (3.4%).

The socio-demographic structure of today's urban regions is undergoing fundamental changes.³ The results of the representative investigation in the urban area of the 9 big cities show a relatively balanced age structure in the urban soci-

² The statistical data have been selected from the time series data and from the 2001 census data of Hungarian Central Statistical Office for the years 1993, 1998, 2001 and 2003. For a more detailed analysis see Balázsné, Varga Margit: *A magyarországi nagyvárosok társadalmi jellemzői: társadalomstatisztikai elemzés* [The Social Characteristics of Hungarian Big Cities: A Socio-statistical Analysis]. Budapest, 2005. (Prepared within the framework of Hungarian National research-Development Programme titled 'Socio-economic Inequalities and Conflicts – the Socio-spatial Factors of European Competitiveness').

³ The zoning of the 9 urban areas of our investigation was partly made on the basis of the traditional (human and ecological) classification categories of urban sociology and partly by local experiences and on-site inspection walks. The following major urban zones were delimited: *central urban zone* or the historic city centre in other words. It is the old town and the first employment zone with the city's employment organisations of outstanding importance (administrative bodies, banks and credit institutes, educational and cultural organisations, offices etc.), business, commercial and entertainment facilities. This area is characterized by multi-storey office blocks and high built-in density. The *transitional zone* comprises industrial plants and commercial centres with their surrounding residential quarters. The *suburban zone* consists of satellite cities standing in close functional relationship with the city. These satellite cities used to function in administrative sense as independent settlements in the past. Today this zone has residential functions primarily. It is generally built in with private houses, housing estates or nowadays more and more gated residential communities are emerging here.

ety of city centres with only a slight deviation from the sample area's average value (see Annex, Table 1). In accordance with the East Central European trends the percentage of the age group over 60 in city centres (and central urban districts) is slightly exceeding the average. The concentration of the age group of 18–29 in central urban districts is much more outstanding (this is not true in case of upper age groups). The results of representative survey are indicating a higher than average presence of the youngest and the oldest generations.

The high concentration of single or two member households in urban centres is also a living reality while larger households are located in suburban districts (Weclawowicz, 1998, 58). Hungarian researches are also indicating a higher concentration of single or two member households in city centres (in transitional zones) than in the sample while four member households or more are typically located in suburban zones and urban peripheries (see Annex, Table 2).

The society of city centres is well-educated (see Annex, Table 3). Our research is indicating a below than average ratio of low educated and an above than average ratio of social groups with secondary education and an even higher rate of university graduates. (The ratio of classes with low educational level is generally higher in the central urban zones of provincial cities, while the ratio of classes with secondary grammar school and engineering school certificate and university degree is higher in the central urban zones of Budapest.)

The ratio of private entrepreneurs, top positioned employees and principally of brain workers is higher in city centres than their average rate in the sample (see Annex, Table 4). Manual workers are located in urban peripheries or in suburban zones in city centres their ratio is by far lower than the average of the sample area. (In provincial city centres the ratio of manual workers is higher than in the central urban zones of Budapest).

Our research has revealed that the poorest social classes are located not in city centres but rather in suburban zones and urban peripheries. The ratio of classes with the lowest monthly income is lower than the average in city centres while the percentage of social classes with the highest monthly income is above the average here (see Annex, Table 5).

As a general rule East Central European cities are not experiencing those striking territorial manifestations of international migration that some cities of the Western world are facing. Legal or illegal immigrants are not segregated into separated urban quarters. Our investigations having been made so far are indicating that the high social classes of Western immigrants are living in the more elite zones of cities in renovated or regenerated central urban quarters or in elegant suburbs. Lower social classes especially immigrants from the east have settled down in the cheaper residential quarters of cities or in low-ranked suburban housing estates (Drbohlav–Cermák, 1998; Beluszky–Szirmai, 2000).

Hungarian big cities are facing similar trends: the high classes of the foreigners of the sample (or to be more precise the foreigners immigrating into the 9 cities of our research) have settled down in historic city centres, in traditional inner city quarters, in good quality residential and villa quarters and in gated residential communities. The low social classes of immigrants live in less elegant residential quarters and socially low-ranked garden city houses. All these are verifying the presence of global trends in Hungary as well.

Our research data are indicating on the one hand that the ratio of well-educated, top positioned, and brain worker groups and wealthy classes is high in city centres. On the other hand our researches have also revealed that poverty is not a typical phenomenon in city centres (and in the central zones of Budapest either) but it is rather more a characteristic feature of suburbs and the village zone of urban peripheries. This is true even if city centres have disadvantaged social groups as well. But our researches on the social structure of city centres, on the socio-demographic features of urban areas have also confirmed that the social status of Hungarian city centre residents is by far higher than the average social position of the residents of urban areas. All these factors are clear evidences of the social modernisation of city centres and of their harmonisation with the current social development tendencies of West European city centres.

5 Migration processes

The population of Hungarian big city centres changes frequently. Our research data show that it is the city centres where the lowest number of people lives since their birth. While out of every big city resident every ninth has been living in the same city where he was born this is true only for 9% of city centre residents. Within this group the ratio of people with secondary school certificate and with university or college degree is higher than the average. The farther we are going out of the central urban zone hierarchically the higher is the number of citizens having been living in the same urban quarter where they were born. About one-third of the residents of urban peripheries have been living at the same residence since their birth. (In transitional zones secondary school and university graduates, in suburban zones people of the lowest educational level, in advanced urban peripheries people with primary and secondary education and in underdeveloped urban peripheries people of secondary education and skilled workers have been living in the largest number at the same residence since their birth).

In the urban areas of our investigation 25% of city centre residents moved into the city centre before 1980. Between 1980 and 1990 the immigration speed into city centres slowed down: 14.5% of today's city centre residents settled down at that time. After 1990 the progress of immigration speeded up again. 22.3% of our

respondents living in the city centre now settled down here between 1990 and 2000 and 28.6% after 2000.

Before 1980 the share of the lowest classes (people with primary education and manual workers) was the highest among immigrants settling down in city centres. Between 1980 and 2000 the influx of the lowest and middle classes (manual workers, people with secondary education) into city centres was the most dominant urban migration trend but after 2000 the immigration of the lowest social classes into city centres became insignificant but middle classes (manual and brain workers, entrepreneurs) were still in great number among immigrants settling down in city centres.

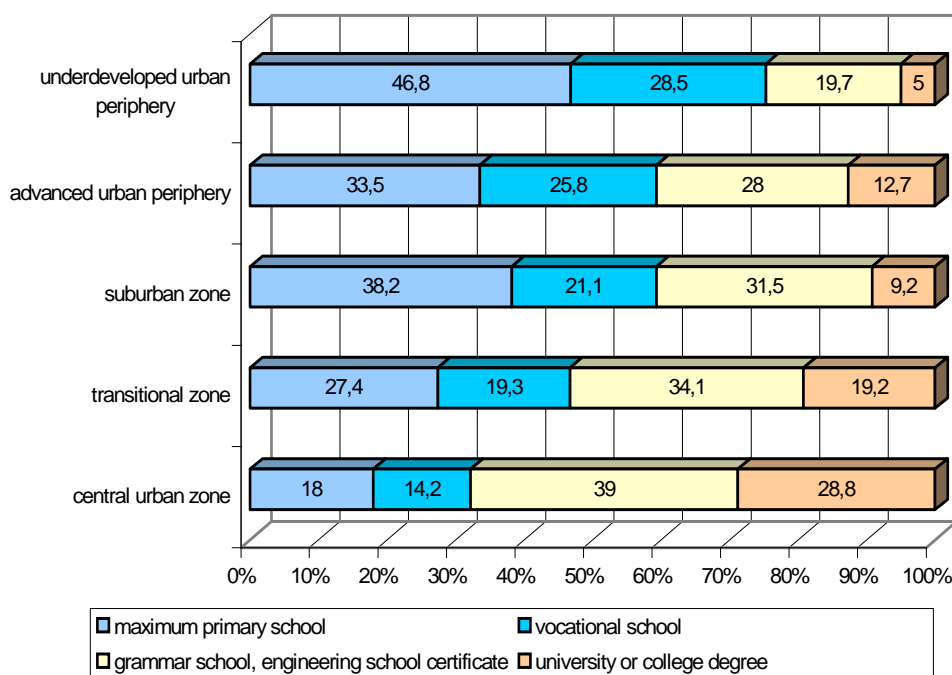
The ratio of citizens graduated from university or college among the new settlers of city centres has been gradually decreasing since 1980 (their ratio among the population of city centres was 30.3% between 1980 and 1990, 26.9% between 1990 and 2000 and 26.1% after 2001). Where did high social classes, especially the professionals graduated from universities move after 1980? Our researches have pointed out that since 1980 they have continuously been moving into advanced suburban zones but in a falling off trend since 1990. After 1990 additional migration trends were emerging. (In advanced suburban zones the percentage of university or college graduates was fairly high between 1980 and 1990 (25%). Between 1991 and 2000 out of the new immigrants into advanced suburban zones 19.5% possessed a university or college degree. After 2001 their share among immigrants was 18.2%. (Their percentage in the research sample is 12.9%).)

High social classes emerged in suburban zones as well after 1990 in a gradually increasing tendency. Between 1981 and 1990 only 5.4% of newcomers settling down in suburbs possessed a university or college degree and this ratio increased to 12.3% between 1991 and 2000 and to 16% after 2001 (the ratio of citizens possessing university or college degree is 8.8% in the sample). Since 2000 they select underdeveloped suburban zones as well for their place of residence. 20% of the newcomers to the city centre at this period are university or college graduates (Their average rate in the sample is 4.5%) (*Figure 2*).

Compared to the sample area's average many socially low positioned immigrants into city centres with primary education have come from underdeveloped suburbs and rural areas. Among middle classes moving into city centres skilled workers doing manual jobs have come from underdeveloped urban districts and from advanced urban peripheries. The majority of others with secondary education with engineering school certificate doing brainwork have come from housing estates or from underdeveloped villages of urban periphery. The ratio of professional classes moving to city centres from elite urban zones and advanced urban peripheries and suburban villa zones is relatively high compared to the research sample.

Figure 2

The spatial distribution of population by educational level in the different zones of urban areas



Source: Edited by Zoltán Ferencz on the basis of the questionnaire survey data carried out in 9 urban areas of Hungary.

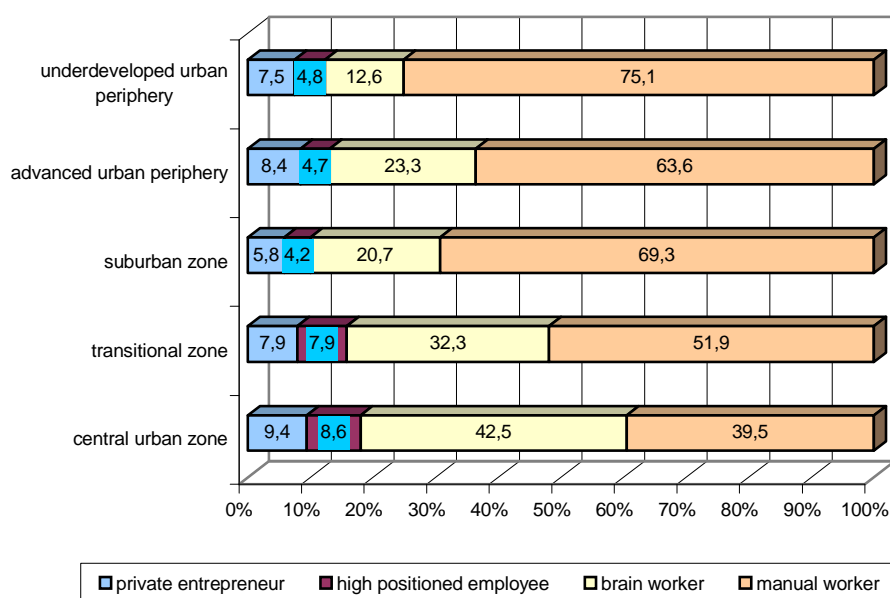
Many (26.2%) of the inhabitants of city centres even if they changed their place of residence did not leave the central urban zone of their city. It is a typical phenomenon for every professional group that they have moved to their present site of residence (at the time of our investigation) from a nearby urban district. This is even truer for low social classes. Their earlier rate of presence in city centres is higher than in the sample (*Figure 3*).

Citizens selecting the city centre for their living environment consider the essential determinants of their urban lifestyle very important. This is verified by their answers to our inquiry on the motivating factors of their residential site selection. The decisions of all the respondents of our research sample were motivated by their own family's domestic affairs. These reasons were completed by additional explanations such as looking for better housing, seeking for better jobs,

better career opportunities and higher salaries. The ratio of citizens explaining their decisions on selecting the city centre to their place of residence by better housing and employment, better transportation, better education and more suitable (for them) social environment in their neighbourhood was higher than the average of total respondents. The ratio of citizens explaining their decision on living in the city centre by its faster development progress was also above the average.

Figure 3

The spatial distribution of population by profession in the different zones of urban areas



Source: Edited by Zoltán Ferencz on the basis of the questionnaire survey data carried out in 9 urban areas of Hungary.

The majority of urban residents do not intend to change their location of residence (79.6% of urban residents and 78.4% of city centre residents). Only 13% of citizens are determined for changing their residential location and 7.3% are wishing to move out from the city centre but their present circumstances do not make it possible. Of the residents of urban peripheries only 4.5% are confident in changing their site of residence and 4.2% are wishing to move but their present circumstances do not make it possible.

The ratio of city centre residents confident in changing their site of residence (17.5%) is highly exceeding the ratio of the sample area. Of the group being confident in moving the ratio of secondary grammar school and engineering school certificate holders doing brainwork is much higher than the average. Of the group confident in moving out from the city centre the ratio of brainworkers is also exceeding the average. In the group intending but having no possibilities for leaving the city centre the ratio of people with secondary level education is high and the ratio of manual workers is extremely high.

Low and middle classes living but intending to leave the city centre are reasoning their decisions principally with their living conditions: the high costs of living in the city centre, their hopes for more affordable living and housing costs at their new location of residence. These classes are also disturbed by the urban society of city centres. (Our research is indicating that the social structure of central urban quarters is strongly criticized by all of its segments but primarily by the lowest and the highest social classes.) Manual workers who live in the city centre are looking for better employment chances and higher salaries aspiring to finding their new homes in Hungary's more advanced regions. High classes would appreciate a better quality of natural environment and the possibility for leading rural lifestyle the best at their new place of residence.

More than 60% of people intending to leave the city centre would like to live in the same city as before and 17% in the neighbourhood of their present home. Within this group the ratio of the highest and the lowest classes (including entrepreneurs) is very high. About 14% are intending to move out into villages in the neighbour of cities. Many of them have secondary educational level and they are employed as manual or brain workers.

Demonstrating the correlation between social and professional hierarchy and the residential zone's hierarchy by a correlation analysis between the position of different social groups and their preferences of residential site selection is the major result of our research. Our research data are indicating a high ratio of low social classes intending to leave the city centre select socially low-ranked urban districts for their new home. These are either poor urban districts in the proximity of city centres or garden city villa suburbs or urban peripheries of rural style. Middle classes in central urban zones prefer elite residential districts and also favour garden city districts or gated residential communities in their residential site selection. The highest social classes and professionals intending to leave the city centre follow two patterns in the selection of their new site of residence: they either move out to elite central urban districts of their cities, the historic old town part or escape out of the city to suburban garden villa quarters or elite gated residential communities. Brainworkers and professionals prefer rural style urban peripheries for their living environment.

6 The social problems of city centres

The research is starting from the assumption that the transition period with its increasing social problems and inequalities of urban societies – in the context of globalisation – may result in sharpening social conflicts⁴. In our investigation of 9 big cities in Hungary we queried the residents of the research sample on their opinions on the social problems of big cities how acute they considered them, what social conflicts they were experiencing in their residential environment and how severe they considered them⁵.

As regards the acuteness of the social problems of big cities the majority of respondents mentioned increasing poverty as the most critical problem (3.54%). Homelessness (3.17%), waste deposits (3.12%) were ranked as less serious but still important issues.

City centre residents attached below than average but suburban residents attached above than average importance to the issues of poverty. Homelessness was mentioned as a serious problem in an above average rate by city centre residents (and of transitional urban quarters). Alcoholism, burglary, organic delinquency, taking drugs, national ethnic conflicts, prostitution, segregation, the coexistence of the two different social classes are clearly perceptible and ranked by city centre residents as critical (above average severity level). (See Annex, *Table 6*).

In conformity with the European trends, the social problems of city centres, or central urban quarters in the proximity of city centres in Hungary are manifested more intensively than in the suburbs. Getting outside of city advancing downward by the ‘urban slope’ the acuteness of urban problems is gradually decreasing. An interesting phenomenon is that the residents of advanced urban agglomerations evaluate the problems of their social environment the least acute.⁶ However there

⁴ The increasing chances for the intensifying of social conflicts have been verified by the relevant international literature as well. Sassen is stating that social conflicts have an extremely brutal character in global cities; the tensions between the rich and the poor classes are manifested by continuous fights between elite and socially low-ranked urban quarters (*Sassen, 2000*).

⁵ The respondents to our questionnaire survey weighed the acuteness of social problems on a scale of five degrees where degree 1 represented the minimal level acuteness of problems and degree 5 represented the maximum level acuteness of problems.

⁶ The research sample of the residential survey included maximum three settlements from the most advanced and maximum three settlements from the backwarded background settlements of each big city. The background settlements were selected by a non-parametric trial named as ranking number method. The ranking was made by the consideration of the indices as follows: accessibility, housing conditions, public and higher education, health service, the activity intensity of local entrepreneurs, taxation, incomes, employment, unemployment, mobility and social provision. The final development ranking was prepared on the basis of the summarized ranking of indices. In each urban area maximum three settlements from the most advanced and maximum three from the most backwarded ones were selected into the sample. These two settlement groups are standing behind the terms of ‘advanced’ and ‘backwarded’ urban peripheries. We have gained very useful experiences from the differentiation of advanced and underdeveloped urban peripheries but

is one thing that differs from the above-described trend. Increasing poverty was ranked as the most acute problem of urban society by the residents of underdeveloped suburban districts and urban peripheries (and reflects the objective reality as well).

A very important result of research is that the ranking of the different problems of urban society is correlating with the concentration of specific social groups in different urban zones and with the individuals' social and personal involvements. In central urban quarters the lowest social classes evaluate the problems of their local society (homelessness, segregation, alcoholism, taking drugs, prostitution, ethnic conflicts, increasing poverty) as the most serious ones. The high social classes of city centres are less worried about the social problems of their local society.

However this trend is turning into a reverse direction in urban peripheries. Low social classes in the neighbourhood of cities seem to be less sensitive about social problems while higher classes (especially in villages with poor infrastructure) evaluate the social issues of their residential environment more problematic.

City dwellers feel social conflicts much more severe and experience them more frequently than the residents of urban peripheries though the evaluations on the five grade scale show a rather weak level of conflicts in absolute sense. (The conflicts between the rich and the poor classes, between the Hungarians and other nationalities, between the old and the young generation seem to be the most intense. Our respondents evaluated the conflicts between the residents of city centres and of urban peripheries and the conflicts between families with children and childless families to be the weakest ones.) City centre residents rank the acuteness level of almost every kind of social conflicts (except conflicts arising from differences in educational level and from differences in nationality) than the average (see Annex, *Table 7*). City centre residents ranked the severity degree of conflicts between the citizens of Budapest and the residents of provincial settlements, between the old and the young and the old generation and between the rich and the poor classes by far higher scores than the average.

The analysis of social professional groups shows a similar trend to the ones seen at the investigation on the acuteness of social problems. University or college graduates living in the city centre score the severity degree of social conflicts below the average and the also experience them more frequently than the average. It is interesting at the same time that the highest sensitivity to social problems is shown not by the low educated classes but rather by people with secondary education level. People graduated from secondary grammar school and engineering

they will be presented in another paper. Differentiating advanced urban peripheries from the underdeveloped ones is very important as it calls the attention for such a new meaning of 'urban slope' which explains the double meanings of core and periphery (See our explanation at a later part of this paper).

school are attaching more importance to social problems and they report they experience their occurrence more frequently as well. The high social classes and university graduates of urban peripheries experience a higher severity of social conflicts and a higher frequency of their occurrence than the average.

The results of our research on the one hand are indicating that the ranking of urban social problems and the opinions on their degree of acuteness are basically determined by the rank of their residential environment within the urban social hierarchy and by the concentration level of local social tensions. Cities and city centres are generating and accumulating a much higher number of problems and tensions than their peripheries. (This is verified by several statistical analyses). On the other hand our researches have also proved that the ranking of social problems and the scoring of their severity degree are also determined by the respondents' social positions. A person's social status, involvement, past experiences, problem-oriented personal ambitions, influencing power and his attitudes towards other social classes are additional but also very important determinants.

7 The changing core-periphery model

Living in European city centres has still preserved its high social reputation. Unlike the American high society West-European middle classes have never refused living in central urban zones. Their outmigration rate from city the centre was never as high as in American cities.

The residents of Hungarian big city centres including middle classes are also highly appreciating the advantages of their central location in the city. City centre residents (mostly the lowest and the highest social classes) are more satisfied with the infrastructure, with the cultural and entertainment facilities, with the employment opportunities, with the urban regeneration processes and built environment of the city centre than the average. On the other hand they (especially high social classes) are less satisfied with the city centre's natural environment, air pollution level, and with the state of green areas. However in our analysis of migration tendencies we have recognized that actually only a minor part of city centre residents leave the city centre. This means that the central parts of big cities are still valuable places to live at. What impacts does it have on the traditional core-periphery model and its social content?⁷ In the traditional core-periphery model the social

⁷ I used core-periphery model in socio-geographic and sociological sense. In socio-geographic sense the core should be interpreted as the spatial centre of a certain geographic unit while periphery means the outer space of the geographic unit. Between core and outer space there may exist economic, infrastructural, functional and social differences or disparities. These disparities are marking out the spatial centre of the geographic unit and the periphery's ecological and social positions. In sociological sense core and periphery are marking out the social rank of the geo-

position of residents is the highest in the city centre. The farther we are moving from the centre the lower it is.

In Hungary big cities (including Budapest) the core-periphery model has never followed directly this pure analogy. City centres had always residents from the lower classes as well. This goes back to architectural reasons on the one hand and to the traditional structure of urban societies resulting from the low percentage of upper and middle classes. The traditional core-periphery model was in change even in the period of state socialism. Some parts of central urban zones lost their high social reputation, because of the physical erosion of their certain quarters and because of the outmigration of middle classes. The emergence of new residential quarters increased the social prestige of transitional urban zones and all these were standing in the way of the decreasing social hierarchy of moving outside the city centre. This could be graphically illustrated by a downward line following an upward line like in a wave. However the transition period introduced a new socio-spatial structure. This has been verified by our researches as well.

We have investigated the social structure of urban areas on several levels within the framework of National Research Development Programme titled '*Urban Areas, Socio-spatial Inequalities and Conflicts – The Socio-spatial Factors of European Competitiveness*'. By statistical data analyses we have examined the infrastructural and institutional background of urban areas⁸ (Baráth–Molnár–Szépvölgyi, 2005a). The analyses revealed the inequalities of infrastructural and institutional supply between cities and their neighbourhood (background settlements), the advantageous positions of cities and the disadvantageous positions of neighbourhood settlements. The inequalities of infrastructural and institutional supply between cities and their neighbourhood and the geographical units of urban areas are marking such ecological positions at the same time that are resulting from differences between core (the city) and peripheral areas (the neighbourhood) originating from their differing infrastructural and institutional supply indices.

Following the mapping of the infrastructural and institutional supply of urban areas we prepared a comparative analysis on the social structure of cities and their environment. From the series of comparative analyses of social statistical data it became evident that cities and their environment have strictly hierarchical social

graphical unit's population in the social hierarchy and the social position of population living in core and peripheral areas.

⁸ For investigating the infrastructural and institutional supply of urban areas we compared background settlements and their urban areas as well as the major factors affecting their accessibility such as their access by dual carriageway and main roads, a coherent system of railway and road connections, the frequency and quality of public transport services, the parameters of real estates and the characteristics of different public utility works. We have assessed the institutional supply in education, health service, cultural facilities and economic, social and commercial services. Our examination of the development process covered a 10 year period between 1993 and 2003. The majority of data sources we have used were provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

structure, high social classes tend to live in cities and low social classes are rather located in the outskirts of cities (*Baráth–Molnár–Szépvölgyi, 2005b*).

The representative sociological research of the 9 urban areas has set up the socio-spatial hierarchy not only in terms of cities and their environment but also of the internal structure of cities. Going outward from city centres towards suburbs and urban peripheries the concentration of high social classes (highly educated qualified workers) is hierarchically decreasing by zones with an increasing rate of low social classes (low educated, unskilled workers). (See *Figures 3–4*).

From the spatial distribution of urban population by educational level and profession we can conclude that the social structure of advanced urban peripheries is stopping the downward line of social status on the above-illustrated ecological and social slope, turning it upward in the shape of a wave. The downward trend of social status level seems to be halted. In the period of transition new social values were attached to urban peripheries. The contemporary socio-spatial processes, suburbanization, the changing economic and social roles and functional relations of urban peripheries divided the social status of urban peripheries into high and low ranked socio-spatial units. Zones and villages of high and low social rank quickly emerged in urban peripheries as well.

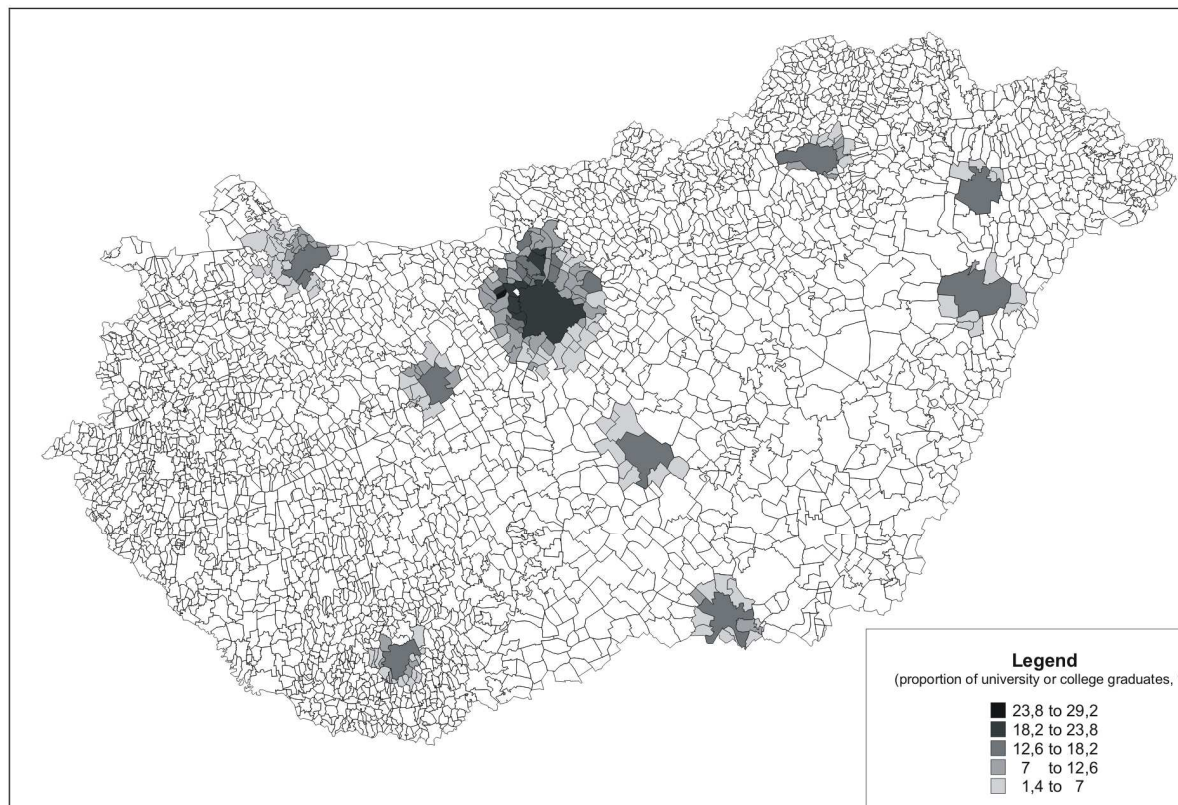
All these trends are verifying the existence of the traditional core-periphery model in Hungarian urban spaces. In cities and their central areas the presence of high classes is dominant while in suburban zones and urban peripheries generally low classes are in majority. Going outward from core areas towards the periphery the social structure shows a hierarchical structure. Going down the ecological-spatial slope indicating the economic, infrastructural and institutional supply level of the different geographical units of urban spaces we can see a gradually decreasing presence of high social classes and a gradually increasing presence of low social classes.

On the basis of the evaluation of research data we can also declare that in Hungarian urban spaces the traditional core-periphery model cannot be identified in its original form any more: the social structure of advanced urban peripheries is firmly breaking up the monotony of the downward line of the ecological-spatial slope of social hierarchy between the 'two endpoints': the core and the periphery.

As a consequence of transition and globalisation the social structure of Hungarian metropolitan spaces with the social content of the core-periphery model have significantly changed. The social processes of the past years through the differentiated – partly high, partly low social contents of the core-periphery model created a *two level socio-spatial hierarchy*. *The first type of socio-spatial hierarchy contains a high-ranked core and a low ranked periphery model. The second type of socio-spatial hierarchy shows a formation of low-ranked core and a high-ranked periphery model. Both hierarchies are simultaneously present in urban spaces.*

Figure 4

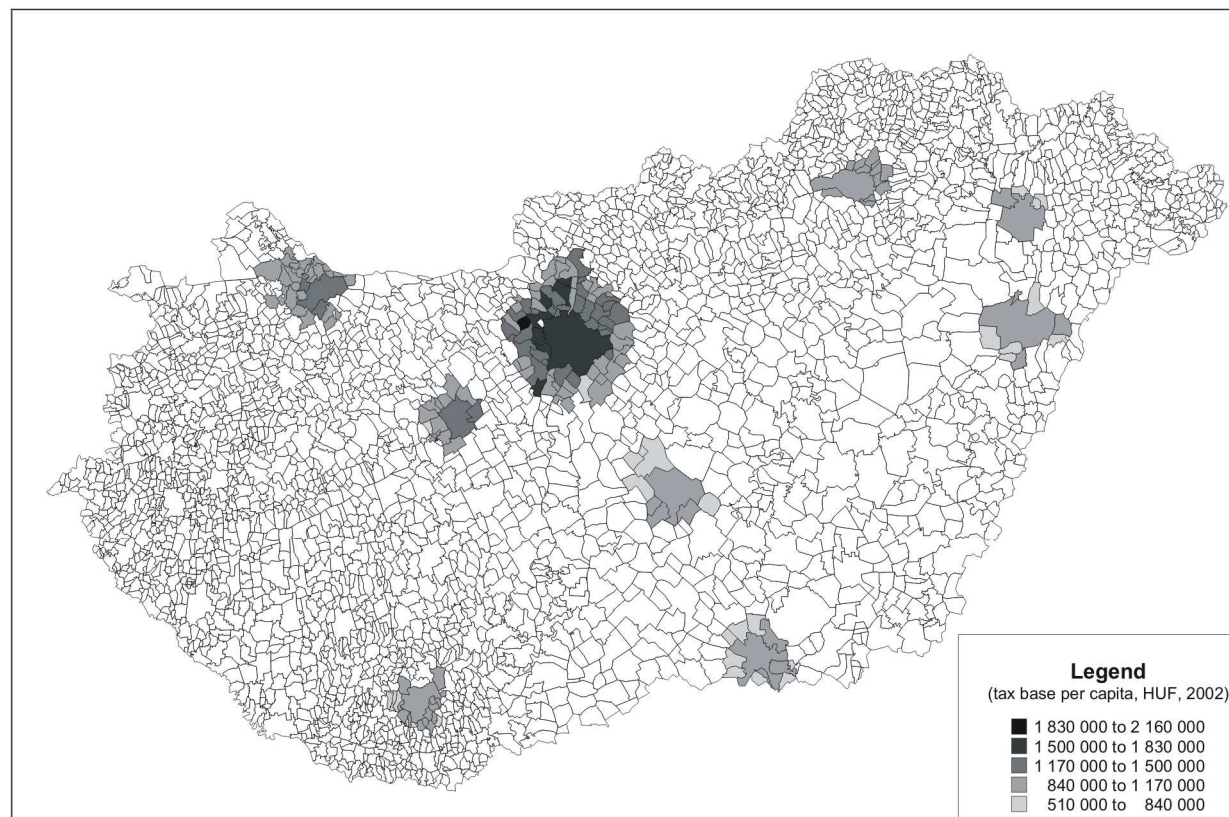
The spatial location of university and college graduates in Hungarian urban areas, 2001



Source: edited by Szépvölgyi Á. on the basis of CSO data.

Figure 5

The per capita volume of tax base in Hungarian urban areas, 2002



Source: edited by Szépvölgyi Á. on the basis of CSO data.

The double face of the core-periphery model is reflected by the strong contradictions between the accumulation of social problems in city centres and the characteristic features of the society of city centres. As we have seen it in our earlier analysis urban social problems have rather more urban character or to be more precise they are more characteristic for the inner areas of cities and suburban areas are usually less affected by these problems. Moving outward from city centres the seriousness of these problems is gradually and hierarchically decreasing. The social structure of urban space is organised in an opposite way. Core areas are much more concentrating high social classes while low classes are rather located in urban peripheries. This is true even if another trend is attaching a new social content to the core area and peripheries.

There may be several reasons why higher social classes attach lower importance to social problems and feel social conflicts less intensive: the similar social structure of their neighbourhood and their life in central urban quarters looks back to a long history. Our data indicate that they are bound to inner city quarters by their work as well. Elite social groups are also more actively participating in urban development projects. During the change of regime they significantly promoted the development projects of city centres fitting into the global trends (Szirmai-Baráth, 2005).⁹ Low social classes attach higher importance to social tensions and consider social conflicts more intense because they in the social milieu of city centres they have no dominance and never they have had ever in history. They can benefit less from the advantages of city centre development and in the majority of cases they are ignored in urban development decisions.

High classes living in urban peripheries may have similar reasons with opposite content for feeling social problems more serious and perceiving social conflicts on a higher intensity. As the social structure of urban peripheries is less segregated (or at least they think so) they have no dominance here or only over partial territories. Here in this milieu they are immigrants only and not the natives. The development of suburbs does not follow the pattern they have set up as a target. The infrastructural development of suburbs is left behind the development of city centres. (High social classes living here are dissatisfied with such local factors they can easily access in city centres but not typical features of a suburb such as cultural and active recreational facilities or the physical conditions of roads and pavements. At the same time they are satisfied with the low noise and clean air of suburbs. This is why they came here.) The lower classes' underestimation of social problems and conflicts may be explained by the fact that in historic perspective they are the dominant power and they are the natives here.

⁹ The results of the empirical research indicate that people living in city centres with high educational level believe more and people with low educational level believe less than the average that during the past ten years their personal and the local residents' requests were taken into account in local governmental decisions

Future trends will probably depend on what will happen in city centres and urban peripheries how their infrastructure and economy will develop and how their social structure will be shaped. What can be expected of the relationship of different social groups? How will they tolerate each other? Will segregation increase, will the processes of spatial segregation intensify or will they weaken instead? Which social groups will dominate in city centres and which ones in suburbs? What further spatial processes can be expected?

Naturally we can outline several scenarios but in my opinion the dominance of the double-structured core-periphery model is the most realistic alternative. In this future model the social value of the core area will further increase especially in that case if the outmigration of high classes from city centres is slowing down and their return to city centres is speeding up. This may turn into reality in case of an increasing volume of regeneration processes in city centres at an increasing intensity of gentrification in inner city quarters and in case of a stagnating or only moderate development of urban peripheries. The increasing social value of city centres may lower the social prestige of certain urban peripheries. On the other hand the social reputation of some other suburban districts may increase and the intention of high social classes and (as our research results indicate) principally of middle classes to leave and move out from city centres may increase the number of advanced urban outskirts and suburban settlements. This process needs a more dynamic development of urban peripheries than now. The still separated rehabilitation of the different parts of central urban districts may favour for the outmigration of middle classes. The future of the double model is fundamentally determined by the perspectives of the social structure, by the tendencies of socio-spatial inequalities and by the spatial mobility strategies resulting from the future positions of the major social job clusters.

8 Summary

The results of the representative sociological research of Hungarian cities and their centres are showing a Hungarian way in the general development tendencies of the European and East Central-European city centres. The processes of transition, the impacts of European and global economic integration have adjusted the characteristic features of Hungarian big city centres to the inner space character of European big cities.

According to the results of research the central areas of Hungarian big cities – following the major features of West European big cities – are concentrating high social classes: people with high educational level and high professional qualifications and with high incomes. The marketable, younger and more active demo-

graphic groups also prefer settling down in the internal zones of urban space¹⁰. The presence of low social classes is higher in suburbs and in backwarded urban peripheries. However handicapped social classes are present in city centres as well and the members of high social classes have also emerged in urban peripheries.

The controversial situation of European and East Central European city centres can be well illustrated by the fact that Hungarian big city centres are concentrating not only high social classes and advanced economy (with high-tech infrastructure and sophisticated institutional system and services) but the majority of physical and social problems as well. The central zones of Hungarian big cities are facing much more social problems than their suburbs and peripheries. The further we are moving away from city centres the lower severity of social problems we meet. Different social groups in accordance with their social positions and interests have different views on their local social problems in central urban quarters low social classes in peripheral zones higher classes have greater sensitivity for social issues.

Following West European trends suburbanisation is a characteristic feature of Hungarian big cities as well although it is taking place with some delay. Suburbanisation in Hungary started in the 1980s and speeded up during the change of regime. Hungarian suburbanisation can be characterized by the territorial restructuring of high social classes within the boundaries of cities and by their gradual relocation into outer urban quarters and suburbs. These classes select elegant suburbs first and later advanced urban peripheries as well. The crisis of inner city quarters and their missing rehabilitation also contributed to the outmigration of high social classes to urban peripheries. The differentiated development of city centres and the simultaneous processes of city modernisation and degradation into slum had also some role in the accelerating immigration of poor classes into city centres. The influx of the poorest classes was uninterrupted until year 2000. After 2000 it significantly fell off. However the immigration of middle classes is still continuous.

The majority of city centre inhabitants are satisfied with their residential environment they have no intention (or possibilities) to move out. The majority of city centre inhabitants wishing to move are still intending to remain within the urban space and a minority is thinking of just changing their flat for a better in the city centre. Thus, the results of research are not encouraging us to expect a significantly accelerated suburbanisation process. Today's urban migration data are anticipating an increasing mobility of middle classes. Presumably it is they are who have not found yet their right living environment.

¹⁰ In this paper we did not have an opportunity for presenting the demographic structure of cities.

Today's social processes and historical determinations the transition, the European and global integration have resulted in such a double socio-spatial structured core-periphery model which can simultaneously be characterized by socially high ranked core and low ranked periphery on the one hand and by socially low ranked core and high ranked periphery on the other hand.

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Annex

Table 1

The distribution of the Hungarian big city sample area by age categories within the different urban zones, %

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Village zone in urban periphery	Total
18 – 29	21.3	16.2	15.2	17.7	17.3
30 – 39	16.5	17.0	21.3	19.8	18.3
40 – 49	14.4	14.5	17.2	14.6	15.3
50 – 59	17.1	21.2	18.7	20.9	19.3
60 and older	30.8	31.1	27.6	27.0	29.8

Table 2

The distribution of the Hungarian big city sample area by household size categories within the different urban zones, %

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Village zone in urban periphery	Total
Single	26.7	25.6	22.1	11.8	24.0
2 members	39.7	30.8	31.5	31.6	33.8
3 members	18.4	22.5	18.1	20.2	19.9
4 members	10.7	14.8	16.2	23.2	14.4
5 or more members	4.5	6.3	12.1	13.3	7.9

Table 3

The distribution of the Hungarian big city sample area by educational level categories within the different urban zones, %

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Village zone in urban periphery	Total
Maximum primary school	18.0	27.4	38.2	42.4	28.8
Vocational School	14.3	19.3	21.2	28.0	18.9
Grammar school, engineering school	39.0	34.1	31.5	22.8	34.1
University or college degree	28.7	19.2	9.1	6.8	18.2

Table 4

The distribution of the Hungarian big city sample area by job position categories within the different urban zones, %

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Village zone in urban periphery	Total
Private entrepreneur	9.2	7.9	5.8	7.0	7.6
Employed top-positioned	8.5	7.8	4.1	6.5	6.8
Brain worker	41.8	32.1	21.0	15.2	30.5
Manual worker	40.5	52.2	69.1	71.3	55.1

Table 5

The distribution of the Hungarian big city sample area by monthly personal income categories within the different urban zones, %

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Village zone in urban periphery	Total
No income	7.5	6.6	8.7	6.0	7.5
Below 50 thousand HUF	14.7	19.0	34.0	38.9	23.6
50 – 75 thousand HUF	31.6	33.0	28.5	31.1	31.0
75 – 100 thousand HUF	22.6	25.5	19.6	15.2	22.3
Above 100 thousand HUF	23.6	15.9	9.2	8.8	15.6

Table 6

*The distribution of the acuteness of local problems by urban zones
 (average values on a 5 degree evaluation scale)*

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Advanced urban periphery	Underdeveloped urban periphery	Total
Increasing poverty	3.49	3.53	3.62	3.19	3.64	3.54
Homelessness	3.59	3.32	2.69	1.59	2.19	3.17
Illegal waste deposits, the absence of selective waste collection	3.42	3.10	2.88	2.89	3.04	3.11
Alcoholism	3.23	3.20	2.86	2.11	2.83	3.06
Burglary, robbery	3.24	3.15	2.91	2.19	2.44	3.06
Taking drugs	3.18	3.06	2.38	1.90	2.00	2.86
Economic crimes	3.13	2.73	2.31	1.46	2.06	2.68
National and ethnic conflicts	2.81	2.65	2.68	1.56	2.14	2.66
Family violence	2.81	2.69	2.48	1.61	2.09	2.62
Organic delinquency	2.98	2.75	2.20	1.32	1.80	2.61
Violence, killing	2.71	2.63	2.30	1.49	1.73	2.50
Prostitution	2.82	2.44	2.21	1.31	1.52	2.45
Residential segregation of poor and rich classes	2.71	2.50	2.23	1.62	1.77	2.43
The coexistence of rich and poor classes	2.42	2.32	2.16	1.52	1.49	2.25

Table 7

*The distribution of the severity of local conflicts by urban zones
 (average values on a 5 degree evaluation scale)*

	Central urban zone	Transitional zone	Suburban zone	Village zone in urban periphery	Total
Between low schooled people and professionals	2.01	2.20	1.95	1.79	2.04
Between the residents of Budapest and of provincial areas	2.11	2.17	1.79	1.92	2.03
Between urban residents and the residents of urban peripheries	1.68	1.80	1.52	1.62	1.67
Between active wage earners and the unemployed	2.15	2.18	1.97	1.74	2.09
Between people with and without children	1.75	1.73	1.49	1.40	1.64
Between the old and the young generation	2.28	2.18	2.15	1.75	2.18
Between rich and poor classes	2.70	2.66	2.27	2.24	2.53
Between wage earners and pensioners	1.92	1.99	1.70	1,52	1.86
Between Hungarians and other nationalities	2.30	2.45	2.45	1.92	2.39
Between new immigrants and the natives	2.02	2.16	1.76	1.55	1.97

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